DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 203 375 CS 206 451

AUTHOR Fairchild, Steven H.; Perry-Sheldon, Barbara
TITLE Learning to Teach Handwriting: A Survey of Training Programs in Virginia and Pennsylvania Colleges.
PUB DATE Mar 81
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Educational Research Association (Philadelphia, PA, March 12-14, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Curriculum Evaluation; *Handwriting Instruction; Handwriting Skills; Higher Education; Program Evaluation; *Teacher Education; Teacher Education Curriculum; *Teacher Education Programs; Teacher Effectiveness; *Writing Research

ABSTRACT

What little research that has been undertaken regarding the handwriting competence of preservice teachers indicates a decline in the legibility of teachers' handwriting, as well as that of students. With this in mind, a study was conducted to identify methods used in training preservice teachers to teach handwriting, to note changes in the teacher education programs, and to learn if colleges were assessing the effectiveness of their program regarding handwriting. A questionnaire was sent to the education departments in all institutions that are accredited for teacher certification in two eastern states. The results showed that no school had a separate course in handwriting and 13 institutions had no program for handwriting instruction at all. Most schools incorporated handwriting in the language arts course or in other methods courses. Few institutions reported significant changes in their handwriting programs, and fewer still foresaw any changes. Only one school indicated using a formalized program to assess its handwriting program. (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

A Paper Presentation

Eastern Education Research Association, 1981

Learning to Teach Handwriting: A Survey of Training Programs in Virginia and Pennsylvania Colleges

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Steven H. Fairchild
Barbara Perry-Sheldon
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Steven H. Fairchild
Barbara Perry-Sheldon

James Madison University
Harrisonburg, Virginia

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED203375

Handwriting readiness and instruction are important elements in the primary school program. Kindergarteners and first graders are involved with learning manuscript; second and third graders learn cursive. The ability to guide the young child in learning the skills of handwriting is an important teacher competency.

In the upper elementary grades and in junior and senior high school the refinement of writing skills is continued. Thus, teacher competency in the area of handwriting extends to all educational levels. Despite this importance, little research has been done regarding the handwriting competence of preservice teachers (Askov, Otto, & Askov, 1970 and Peck, Askov, & Fairchild, 1980).

In reviewing research on handwriting skills, Groff (1975) noted a decline in the legibility of children's handwriting. Citing other researchers, Groff speculated that the legibility of teachers' handwriting has also declined. Groff concluded that "there is less time available in today's teacher education courses for students to learn to handwrite legibly" (p. 38). Huitt (1972), in an earlier review of handwriting research, forecasted that "college teachers will place renewed emphasis on ways of teaching handwriting in preservice methods classes" (p. 222).

CS206451

Several questions emerge from reading Groff, Huitt and others: Have the handwriting skills of teachers declined? How prepared are teachers to teach handwriting? What are colleges doing to help prospective teachers learn to write and to teach handwriting? The present pilot study addresses this last question.

The purpose of the present study was to begin to identify methods used in training preservice teachers to teach handwriting, to note changes in the teacher education programs, and to learn if colleges are assessing the effectiveness of their programs regarding handwriting.

Methods

A one-page questionnaire was mailed to the education departments in all institutions in Virginia and Pennsylvania which are accredited for teacher certification. (These two states were selected based on interests and familiarity to the researchers. Also, the states are diverse in population.) The questionnaire asked the size of the institution, the number of elementary and early childhood education majors, and where handwriting methods are included in the training program. Each respondent was asked to list the materials and techniques used for instruction in handwriting methods, to list how current activities differ from five years ago, to list proposed changes, and to explain any research done regarding handwriting.

Results

The rates of return of the questionnaires were 57% (17 out of 30) for Virginia and 49% for Pennsylvania (42 out of 86). The low rate of response limits generalization; however, the similarity of responses tends to make the responses appear representative. Responses were received from institutions

of various sizes, both public and private, and from all areas of the two states. Results are summarized in Figures 1 - 3.

Discussion

Figure 1 lists the methods of instruction reported. No school had a separate course in handwriting. Thirteen institutions reported no program for handwriting instruction; some of these only have secondary education programs. Most schools incorporated handwriting in the language arts course or in other methods courses. Only one institution reported information regarding methods for prospective secondary teachers. The types of materials and methods used were similar for all sizes of institutions. When handwriting instruction is part of the language arts class, a greater variety of materials and techniques are used than when it is taught as part of other courses. Practice on correct letter formation, in doing charts, and doing chalkboard writing appeared to be the major emphasis of programs.

Figure 2 identifies changes made in handwriting programs during the past five years. Few institutions reported significant changes. Only six institutions had increased time spent on handwriting. Updating materials was the most frequently reported change. These findings tend to indicate that Huitt's 1972 forecast has not come true for the majority of institutions in this study.

Figure 3 lists proposed changes. Very few institutions listed foreseen changes. Two schools mentioned spending more time discussing the needs of handicapped children. One school plans to require junior and senior high education majors to have handwriting methods.

In response to the question on research, only one school indicated using a formalized program to assess its handwriting methods program; several

mentioned informal assessment such as observing the handwriting of student teachers. The responses tend to indicate that current means of evaluation are viewed as adequate.

Conclusions and Inferences

The researchers recognize the limits of their sample size which needs to be broadened. Other areas of the country need to be included, thus increasing the generalizability of the results and providing a firmer basis for conclusions and inferences.

It was noted that few institutions formally assess the quality and long-term effects of their handwriting instructional programs. This may be why most plan no major handwriting program changes.

Only two schools listed the incorporation of materials related to the mainstreamed child. Under P.L. 94-142 more and more special needs children will be in the regular classroom. Teachers will need to learn special techniques for helping handicapped children learn to handwrite.

Handwriting is an important skill to be learned in the early years of school. The emphasis on handwriting may have changed, yet, teachers need to be trained for teaching this skill. More research is needed to see if programs are successful.

Formal research needs to be done to establish the influence of the quality of a teacher's handwriting on the quality of children's handwriting. Such research can then be related to teacher training programs.

Research needs to be done, too, regarding the relationship of typing to handwriting. Typing is becoming more and more important in the educational program. Using microcomputers and other learning aids increases the need for typing skills. Should typing, however, replace the need for legible handwriting?

Do preservice teachers know the research regarding typing in the elementary school?

Handwriting research findings are usually presented to students via language arts methods textbooks. Only one institution reported the use of supplementary research studies. It appears that a greater "theory into practice" approach may be needed to incorporate more research findings.

References

Askov, E., Otto, W., & Askov, W. A decade of research in handwriting: Progress and prospect. Journal of Educational Research. November, 1970, 100-111.

Groff, P. Can pupils read what teachers write. The Elementary School Journal. October, 1975, 33-39.

Huitt, R. Handwriting: The state of the art. Childhood Education. January, 1972, 219-223.

Peck, M., Askov, E., & Fairchild, S. Another decade of research in handwriting: Progress and prospect. Journal of Educational Research. May/June, 1980, 283-298.

Figure 1
Placement and Methods of Handwriting Instruction

	Size of Institution (Number of Respondents)							
	below 3000 (28)		3000+ (10)		6000+ (2)		over 9000 (5)	
	1*	2*	1*	2*	1*	2*	1*	2*
Chapter in textbook	5		3		1		1	
Class lecture	4		1		1		1	
Demonstration by consultants	1							
Discussion of methods for exceptional children	1							
Discussion of research							1	
Discussion of skill development in secondary schools		1						
D'Nealian methods							1	
Evaluating children's writings			1					
Feedback during student teaching								1
Grading - point system pass/fail quiz	1		2				1	
Making charts, posters	1	1	2					
Modules, independent study	3		2				1	
Plan/teach lesson	2							
Practice-chalkboard/paper	9	1	3		1		2	
Various commercial materials	5	2					1	
Videotapes/ overhead	1		1					
Zaner-Bloser materials	10	5	5	1			3	

*1 Language Arts Methods Course

*2 Other Curriculum Areas

Figure 2

How does your present program differ from the program five years ago regarding materials used, amount of instruction, requirements, etc.? (number indicates mentioned more than once)

Increased amount of time in Language Arts class (6)
More hands-on experiences (4)
Updated materials (11)
More practice time (4)
Demonstrate skill during field work (3)
More work regarding exceptional children (2)

Calligraphy for enrichment
Less formal
Less time
Letter cutting
More open attitude toward less traditional methods
Require more samples of work
Using videotaped models

Figure 3

Are changes in present instructional methods foreseen? If so, please list. (number indicates mentioned more than once)

Plan to increase time for practice, remedial sessions (3)
Greater attention to methods for teaching the handicapped (3)
Use new materials, use Zaner-Bloser or books from local schools (3)

Require more of junior and senior high teachers
Integrate handwriting with other language arts subjects